Ancient kitchen secrets REVEALED: How garlic, ginger and green onions fight cancer and heart disease

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- Garlic, ginger and green onions have been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) for centuries to support immunity, balance and disease prevention. Modern research confirms their antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and anticancer properties.

- Garlic contains allicin, which helps prevent cancer (especially stomach and colorectal) and supports heart health by lowering blood pressure and preventing plaque buildup. It has antibacterial, liver-protective and digestive benefits, but excessive intake (more than 3–5 cloves daily) may irritate the eyes and lungs.

- Green onions are rich in sulfur compounds that fight tumors and antibacterial properties. They help relieve constipation due to pectin content and is used in TCM to treat colds by promoting circulation and sweating.

- Ginger contains gingerol and shogaol, which fight cancer by inducing cell death and preventing metastasis. It warms the stomach, aids digestion and balances cold foods—ideal for summer consumption to counteract excessive cold from air conditioning and iced drinks.

- Combining garlic and ginger may enhance health benefits. Together, they offer anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, immune-boosting and heart-protective effects. They may also lower blood sugar, improve cognitive health and reduce cancer risk, but high-dose supplements should be taken under medical supervision.

In a world dominated by advanced medical technologies and pharmaceuticals, it's easy to overlook the powerful health benefits of simple kitchen ingredients. Garlic, ginger and green onions, however, have been valued for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) for their ability to restore balance and support the body's natural defenses. Modern science is now catching up, validating the ancient wisdom of these humble plants.

Health benefits and uses of garlic

Garlic, a staple in many cuisines, is widely regarded as one of the most potent natural foods for cancer prevention. The key to its effectiveness lies in its compound, allicin. According to a 2022 review, allicin can inhibit the growth of various types of tumors, particularly stomach and colorectal cancers.

"Beyond its potential anticancer effects, garlic also supports cardiovascular health by slowing vascular aging, lowering blood pressure and preventing atherosclerosis or the

buildup of plaque in the arteries," states Dr. Naiwen Hu, a naturopathic physician and health journalist.

A dose-response trial found that hypertensive patients who took aged garlic extract capsules for 12 weeks experienced an average systolic blood pressure reduction of nearly 12 mmHg compared to the control group. The medicinal benefits of garlic have been recognized for centuries. In the classical Chinese text “Essential Notes of Materia Medica (Ben Cao Bei Yao),” garlic is described as a remedy that stimulates appetite, strengthens the spleen, supports organ function and wards off epidemics.

People in ancient times also discovered its anti-inflammatory properties, using it to treat hemorrhoids and fistulas. Some even burned garlic stalks into ash and applied it to wounds to help reduce inflammation. A 2024 comprehensive review showed that garlic possesses antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory properties, while also protecting the liver, kidneys and digestive system.

However, it is important to eat garlic in moderation. "A daily intake of three to five cloves is sufficient, as excessive consumption may have adverse effects on the eyes and lungs," advises Dr. Hu. "This is particularly relevant for people with poor vision. I once had a patient who loved eating garlic but experienced red, irritated eyes afterward. I advised him to drink a cup of strong tea after eating garlic, which helped alleviate the issue."

Health benefits and uses of green onions

Green onions, like garlic, contain sulfur compounds with antibacterial properties. A comparative study found that sulfur compounds extracted from green onions and garlic can inhibit tumor cell proliferation. At certain concentrations, these compounds are nontoxic to normal cells while still exerting antitumor effects.

Green onions can also help relieve constipation due to their pectin content, a type of soluble dietary fiber. Pectin increases stool moisture, promoting healthy bowel movements. Green onions are a versatile ingredient that can elevate simple dishes while offering health benefits. Below are two easy recipes that make the most of their flavor and medicinal properties.

Stir-fried pork with green onions: Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1/2 tablespoon sesame oil or other cooking oil
- 200 grams (about 7 ounces) pork belly or pork shoulder, thinly sliced
- 1/2 tablespoon cooking wine (optional)

- 4–5 stalks green onions, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (adjust to taste)
- Pinch of white pepper (optional)

Instructions:

1. Heat the sesame oil in a skillet or wok over medium heat.
2. Add the pork slices and stir-fry until they begin to brown and the fat starts to render.
3. Add the cooking wine, if using, and continue stir-frying for another minute.
4. Add the green onions and stir-fry for 1–2 minutes, until they are tender but still bright green.
5. Season with soy sauce, salt and white pepper. Stir well to combine.
6. Serve hot with rice or as a side dish.

Green onion soup: Recipe

Ingredients:

- 500 milliliters (16.9 fluid ounces) water
- 3 green onions (use the lower white part), finely chopped

Instructions:

1. Bring the water to a boil in a small pot.
2. Add the chopped green onions and let simmer for 1 minute.
3. Turn off the heat, cover the pot and let the soup steep for another minute.
4. Strain out the green onions and drink the soup while it is warm.

As the seasons change, fluctuations in temperature can increase susceptibility to colds. In TCM, the lower white part of the green onion is commonly used as a cold remedy. TCM practitioners believe that green onions help induce sweating, expel cold and improve circulation—supporting the body's natural flow of qi (energy) and blood while also warming the body. You can also cook the green onion soup with white rice to make a soothing porridge that can help ease cold symptoms.

Health benefits and uses of ginger

Ginger root contains two powerful anticancer compounds: gingerol and shogaol. The older the ginger, the more gingerol it contains. Research has shown gingerol can destroy tumor cell mitochondria, induce apoptosis (cell death) and inhibit cancer cell metastasis. When fresh ginger is heated, gingerol converts into shogaol. A 2023 study found that shogaol can induce apoptosis in ovarian cancer cells. Additionally, when taken alongside the targeted cancer therapy drug gefitinib, it may help prevent cancer cells from developing drug resistance.

To maximize these benefits, try incorporating ginger into your cooking. You can use it to enhance the flavor of vegetable dishes, neutralize fishy odors from soups, or brew a cup of brown sugar ginger tea on cold days—all of which provide both gingerol and shogaol.

Eating ginger in summer

In TCM, foods and herbs can be classified based on their cooling or warming properties. Eating cool or cold-natured foods has a cooling effect on the body, while warm or hot-natured foods help generate internal warmth.

As the Chinese saying goes, "Eat radish in winter and ginger in summer, and you will stay healthy without a doctor." Ginger has a warming nature, and eating it during the summer can help expel internal cold and warm the stomach. During hot weather, many people turn the air conditioning to its lowest setting and drink ice-cold beverages. While this may feel refreshing, it can harm the digestive system.

"In TCM, the stomach and its corresponding organ, the spleen, function best in warmth and do not respond well to excessive cold. Overloading the body with cold foods and drinks is believed to increase cold energy in the stomach and spleen, potentially leading to digestive issues such as stomach pain and diarrhea," explains Dr. Hu.

Therefore, even in summer, it is important to keep the digestive system warm. A great way to do this is by adding ginger to meals and soups. Consider stir-frying shredded ginger with king oyster mushrooms and pork strips for a light yet flavorful dish, or add a few slices of ginger to mung bean soup to balance its cooling effect.

Strengthening the spleen and stomach

According to TCM's organ system theory, the spleen is more than an anatomical organ—it represents an energy system that also governs the pancreas and digestive tract. When the spleen is weakened by excessive cold, the body's fluid metabolism slows down, leading to dampness. This can result in symptoms such as bloating, fatigue and joint pain. Once dampness is expelled, the body feels lighter and more energized.

For those who often experience cold hands and feet in winter, a cup of ginger black tea can help warm the body quickly.

Ginger black tea: Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon freshly grated mature ginger (or 1–2 teaspoons ginger juice)
- 1 cup (240 milliliters) hot black tea
- 1–2 teaspoons brown sugar (adjust to taste)

Instructions:

1. Wash a piece of mature ginger thoroughly and grate it into a fine paste.
2. Brew a cup of black tea.
3. Stir in the grated ginger (or ginger juice) and add brown sugar to taste.
4. Mix well and enjoy while hot.

Alternatively, you can buy brown sugar ginger cubes from the supermarket. Simply brew a cup of black tea and add a cube for an instant warming drink. If you do not like the fibrous texture of grated ginger, you can substitute it with ginger juice. Drinking ginger black tea warms the stomach and helps dispel cold, leaving you feeling cozy and relaxed.

Health benefits of ginger, onions and garlic

In a fast-paced world, it's hard to maintain a healthy diet. However, using natural ingredients like ginger, onions and garlic in your recipes can provide extraordinary health benefits. Within weeks of cooking for yourself and using these ingredients, you'll feel and see a healthier you.

Ginger

- Relieves indigestion and nausea
- Lowers cholesterol and blood sugar
- Reduces muscle and arthritis pain
- Fights germs
- Aids weight loss

Onions

- Reduces swelling (inflammation)
- Relieves lung tightness (asthma)
- Lowers cholesterol and blood sugar

Garlic

- Reduces high blood pressure
- Improves blood circulation
- Lowers cholesterol
- Prevents arteriosclerosis
- Reduces swelling (inflammation)

For easier use, run several peeled cloves of garlic in your food processor and store it in your refrigerator with a little salt and oil. You may also roast whole garlic cloves and oil. Store them in an airtight jar in your refrigerator and don’t forget to use the oil when sautéing proteins and vegetables. Eat slowly as it will help with digestion and with most meals, take as much time to eat your food as it took to prepare. Proper digestion will aid in weight loss and will help prevent the urge to snack later.

7 Impressive benefits of combining garlic and ginger

Garlic and ginger are both famous for their health benefits. Decades of scientific research have shown that these popular ingredients have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and may offer some protection against disease. Combining them may also have health-promoting effects.

1. **Provides anti-inflammatory benefits -** Both garlic and ginger contain powerful anti-inflammatory plant compounds that may help inhibit pro-inflammatory proteins associated with chronic inflammation.

2. **May protect against cellular damage -** Studies show that garlic and ginger may help reduce markers of oxidative stress and boost antioxidant defenses.

3. **May benefit cognitive health -** Regularly consuming garlic and ginger or taking garlic and ginger supplements may help protect against cognitive impairment and improve cognitive function.

4. **May reduce heart disease risk factors -** Studies have shown that garlic and ginger have strong heart-protective properties and may help decrease some risk factors of heart disease.

5. **May be beneficial for those with diabetes -** Garlic and ginger may help reduce blood sugar levels and improve other markers of health in people with diabetes.

6. **Potential anticancer properties** - Some evidence suggests that a diet rich in garlic and ginger may help protect against certain types of cancer due to their concentration of anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds.

7. **May promote a healthy immune response -** Garlic and ginger have potent anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antiviral and antimicrobial properties, which can help keep your immune system healthy.

The bottom line is that while the combined effects of garlic and ginger are still being studied, adding these powerful ingredients to your diet will likely benefit your health in numerous ways. However, if you're interested in taking high-dose garlic and ginger supplements, it's important to consult with a healthcare professional, especially if you have a medical condition or are taking medication.

Sources include:

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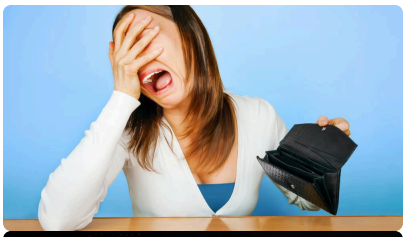

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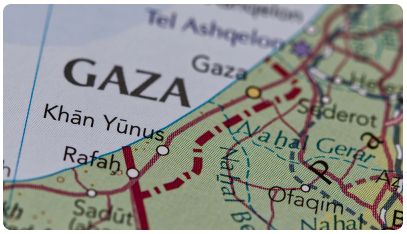

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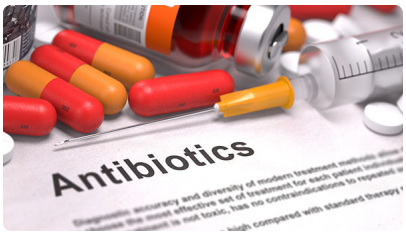

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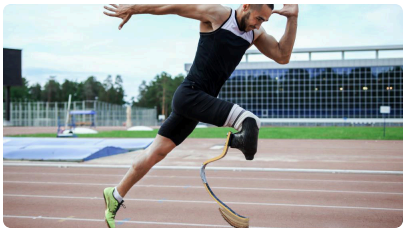

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